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4-29 GALA Looking For A Few Good Ushers

GALA Hispanic Theatre, which has moved into its new, permanent home in the restored Tivoli in Columbia Heights, has begun to recruit volunteers who will usher during their shows in exchange for the chance to see the show for free. This is the procedure that many professional theaters in the Potomac Region follow and many local theater enthusiasts find that it is a pleasant and effective way to see a lot of shows with out busting their budget. The theater is a block from the Columbia Heights metro stop, making it easy for ushers and patrons alike to reach it. An ushers' orientation meeting will be held this Monday at 6 pm. Ushers will then be able to work the next GALA show, *Real Women Have Curves*, which will be GALA's first-ever show performed in English with Spanish surtitles. To volunteer, call 202-234-7174 or email jenny@galatheatre.org. Many of the theater lovers who see shows as ushers participate in the Ushers' Favorite Show Award program sponsored by Potomac Stages. Click here to see how to participate in that program.

4-28 Studio's Syringa Tree Wins 2004 Annual Ushers' Favorite Show Award

The theater enthusiasts who usher in theaters in the Potomac Region, and who participate in the Ushers' Favorite Show Award program sponsored by Potomac Stages, selected the Studio Theatre's production of Pamela Gien's The Syringa Tree, which starred Gin Hammond, as their favorite show for the entire year of 2004. The production, directed by J.R. Sullivan, had been selected twice for the monthly favorite show award, once in a tie in February and again as the sole selection in March. The selection earned the Studio Theatre this trophy.

If you usher at local theaters and would be interested in participating in the Ushers' Favorite Show Award program, click here to learn how to sign up.

4-27 Memorial Service for WAPAVA's Jim Taylor Set for May 6

There will be a memorial service for James J. Taylor, founder of the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive (WAPAVA) who died of appendiceal cancer in February of this year, at the Shakespeare Theatre at 4 pm on Friday, May 6. Taylor founded WAPAVA in 1993 and personally recorded virtually all of the over 400 videos capturing live productions of local companies which now reside in the archive and are available for public viewing and study at the Washingtonianna Collection of the DC Public Library as well as at the Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Maryland in College Park. The collection contains a priceless selection of most of the best of the work on local stages for over a decade. To arrange to speak either at the service or at a "Quaker meeting" style session to follow, contact WAPAVA at 4205 Glenridge Street, Kensington MD 20895-3712.

4-26 A Thought to Ponder - Is Broadway All There Is In The Eyes of The Post?

Opening the Sunday Washington Post to the Arts section, we were struck by the emphasis placed on New York theater, specifically on Broadway, in the four article feature on "Comedy's Changing Face." Along with analyses of the increased emphasis on comedy on "Television," the "Internet" and in "Stand-Up," was a thoughtful piece by Peter Marks labeled "Theater," which the headline accurately said was about "Broadway, Just Loony About Musical Comedies." We don't know if Marks' instructions from his editors were to write about Broadway or about theater, but somewhere, someone confused that collection of thirty-nine commercial houses 225 miles north of the Beltway with "theater" in America. We'd point out that we know of 81 professional theaters just here in the Potomac Region. What is more, we note that the Helen Hayes Awards organization reports that there were 383 productions

by their member professional theaters here last year, ten times the number of new productions on Broadway. Taking a larger view of it, we recall that Bob Mondello in his recent multi-part NPR series on regional non-profit theaters in America reported that there are 1,274 such theaters across the country. We note that Broadway's 11 million tickets accounted for just about a quarter of the 46 million tickets to professional theater sold in 2003. Yes, Marks included brief mentions of the Kennedy Center and Signature Theatre in one paragraph of the article, the Post reviews many local professional productions and Jane Horwitz' "Back Stage" column is devoted exclusively to the local scene. Still, we wonder why a story about a trend in "theater" would only discuss an emerging trend in the Broadway niche, especially when that niche isn't in the region that is home to the paper.

4-25 Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE Gives Student Plays Free Professional Readings Tonight

Plays by students from five schools participating in the Young Playwrights program will be given staged readings by professional performers at CENTERSTAGE in a program beginning at 7 o'clock tonight, which will be followed by a reception in honor of the 243 first through twelfth grade students who submitted scripts in the program. The plays being performed are:

- *Why Palm Trees Have Coconuts* by Lizzie Smith, a second grader at Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore
- *Solar Sisters Save the Universe* by second graders Dylan Balter and Hanna Pearl Lau of Baltimore's Midtown Academy
- *Johnny and the Dust Bunnies* by Andrea Marchak, a sixth grader at Harford Day School in Harford County
- *Admissions Statement* by Emily Pueschel, a twelfth grader at Baltimore County's Eastern Technical High School
- *Wholesale Candidate* by David Kongstvedt, an eleventh grader at The Field School in Montgomery County.

4-22 Eight Local Theaters Participate in Bethesda's "Play in a Day"

Tomorrow night will see the debut performances of eight short plays which haven't been written yet. This morning at 8, the audience at the Bethesda Literary Festival's Poetry Slam at the Washington School of Photography on Rugby Avenue will be asked to help determine themes for eight ten-minute plays. The participating playwrights will have until dawn on Saturday to write the pieces; directors and actors will then have until evening to rehearse. At 8 pm on Saturday the plays will have their first (and perhaps last) performances in the auditorium of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School at 4301 East-West Highway. For full information, call 301-215-6660. The participating theaters are:

- Actors' Theatre of Washington
- Adventure Theatre
- Horizons Theatre
- Imagination Stage
- Olney Theatre Center for the Arts
- Quotidian Theatre
- Source Theatre Company
- Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

4-21 Potomac Stages Profiles Singer/Director/Teacher Jane Pesci-Townsend

The latest Potomac Region theater personality to be featured in Potomac Stages' series of personality profiles is Jane Pesci-Townsend, noted actress and singer, Chair of the Department of Musical Theatre at the Catholic University of America, director of the Musical Theatre Institute for Teens at the Theatre Lab and director of the up-coming production of *The Last Five Years* at MetroStage. Click here to read the full profile.

4-20 Four New Works Commissioned By Signature

Signature Theatre has commissioned four new works as part of its mission to develop and present plays and musicals both old and new. Here is information on the four, which may be developed for production in future seasons:

- *Save The Date*, a comedy set at a high school reunion, is by Eric Pfeffinger whose last full-length play, *Accidental Rapture,* was directed in Chicago by Signature's new Associate Artistic Director Rick DesRochers.
- DesRochers will also collaborate with local composer lyricists David Maddox (*Sing Down the Moon*, *Perseus Bayou*) in creating a play with music on the subject of Don Juan.
- Quiara Alegría Hughes, author of *Yemaya's Belly* which is slated for production at Signature in November, will develop a piece inspired by the masks of the the Kwakwaka-wakw speaking peoples of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Hughes' is researching the masks which open to reveal different masks inside, thus the title of her play is *Transformation Masks*.
- Signature partners with Playwright's Center of Minneapolis to sponsor the workshop of *Vrooommm! A NASComedy* by Janet Allard with Michael Bigelow Dixon, Literary Director for the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

4-19 Musical Workshopped In Maryland Heads to Scotland

Rumplestiltskin's Daughter, a musical by Tim Battle and Robert Neal Marshall that had its premiere workshop at the Chesapeake Arts Center with Jason Brown acting as Musical Director, has been accepted for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the festival which originated the concept of a city-wide assembly of new works by small groups back in 1947. The show ran at the Chesapeake in November, 2002. It is a family-friendly musical version of a children's book which carries the story of Rumplestiltskin through another generation with the gold-spinner's daughter outwitting a greedy king. The performances for the Fringe will be at The Assembly Rooms, an eighteenth century building in downtown Edinburgh that runs shows morning afternoon and evening throughout the festival in August each year. Click here to read our review of the show's workshop premiere.

4-18 Winners Recognized At College Theater Festival at Kennedy Center

The Thirty-Seventh American College Theater Festival, which kicks off this evening at the Kennedy Center, will see the presentation of many awards for work in a number of disciplines. In addition to the productions which will perform which we announced previously (Western Michigan University's *Othello,* The University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff's *The Hip-Hop Project,* The Playwrights' Theatre at Boston University's *Jasper Lake* and Minnesota State University-Moorhead's *Never Swim Alone)* a major focus of the festival will be the presentation of awards. Finalists for awards in eight categories ranging from acting to set, light, costume and sound design and dramaturgy will learn who takes home those awards. The winners of these awards have already been announced:

- The National Student Playwriting Award and The Paula Vogel Award in Playwriting goes to John Kuntz of the Playwrights' Theatre at Boston University for *Jasper Lake.*
- The Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award goes to Katori Hall of Harvard University for *Hoodoo Love*.
- The Jean Kennedy Smith Playwriting Award goes to Paul McCabe of Ithaca College for *Get Off*.
- The David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award goes to Ed Stevens of Sand Diego State University for *After*.
- The Mark Twain Comedy Playwriting Award goes to Gregory Fletcher of Playwrights' Theatre at Boston University for *Cow-Tipping and Other Signs of Stress.*
- The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Award for Latino Playwriting goes to Leonard Madrid of the University of New Mexico for *Tecolotito* and Marco Ramirz of New York University for *A Place Without Seasons*.
- The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Musical Theater Award goes to Peter Lerman of Columbia University for *To Memphis (with the intention of returning)*.

In addition, Michael Norton of North Carolina A&T will receive a $10,000 scholarship as part of the Stephen and Christine Schwarzman Award for Excellence in Theater which bestows a $10,000 award on its recipient plus a $10,000 scholarship award on the student of his or her choice. The award this year goes to legendary scenic designer Ming Cho Lee and he has selected Norton for the scholarship award to permit him to pursue graduate studies under the University of South Carolina's Nic Ularu.

4-15 Hathaway and Levine's Just Theater Covers Big River, Omnium Gatherum and The Tempest

The April edition of the Montgomery Community Television program **Just Theater** featuring Potomac Stages' Brad

Hathaway and Channel 21's Faiga Levine will air twice a week on Channel 21, on Wednesdays at 8 pm and Fridays at 4:30 pm. The topics of conversation this month are the Ford's Theatre presentation of Deaf West's *Big River*, Olney Theatre Center's *Omnium Gatherum* and Kate Whoriskey's production of *The Tempest* at the Shakespeare Theatre.

4-14 Free Tickets To Atlas Opening Shows Available This Afternoon

The Atlas Performing Arts Center on H Street NE officially opens this weekend with celebrations, ceremonies and performances. All of the activities are free but some of the events require admission tickets because of limited seating. The free tickets will be distributed at the Atlas' box office between noon and 6 pm today (additional tickets may be available on the day of each performance). Actor, singer, director and choreographer Debbie Allen will cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony starting at 10:30 on Saturday which will be followed by a day long open house. The first event requiring a ticket is the 8:30 pm performance by Helen Hayes Award Nominee for Outstanding Lead Actor, Stephen Hayes, recreating his role in the solo-performer play *Beyond Glory*. On Sunday at 7:30 pm, Journeymen Theater Ensemble will present a staged reading of a play followed by a discussion. On Monday at 7:30 pm the DC Cabaret Network presents an evening of cabaret performances, and on Wednesday at 7:30 pm the African Continuum Theatre Company, which will be the professional theater in residence at the Atlas, will present a staged reading of Dominic Taylor's new play *Federal Territory* directed by company member Ken Yatta Rogers. The Atlas, as a performing arts center, will also be presenting non-theater performances by dance companies, the Levine School of Music and other organizations throughout the opening week.

4-13 Caveman's Run Comes To Only A Temporary End

The run of *Rob Becker's "Defending the Caveman"* at the Rosslyn Spectrum, which has been extended time and time again, will finally come to an end on Sunday April 30 -- but it will be a temporary suspension. The show is now slated to return to the Spectrum on October 26 for an open ended run. The show started its run at the Spectrum last October with Chris Sullivan performing the solo-performer show but Keven Burke took over in January. It hasn't been announced yet who will be performing the piece when it returns in October.

4-12 Ford's Big River Extended A Full Month

Ford's Theatre has announced that the run of the Deaf West version of Roger Miller's musical *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will be extended through June 4, a full month beyond its original closing date. The production, which was designated a Potomac Stages Pick, features both singing and signing using a deft translation into American Sign Language. Director/choreographer Jeff Calhoun stages the piece to capture the magic for both hearing and deaf audiences, even going to the extent of having multiple performers playing a single role. Huck himself is portrayed by Gallaudet University freshman Christopher B. Corrigan who signs his dialogue and songs, while Bill O'Brien in the role of Mark Twain voices his words. Michael McElroy, on the other hand, both sings and signs the role of runaway slave Jim as he recreates his Tony Award nominated performance.

4-11 Synetic Includes Stops at Kennedy Center and Theater J in 2005-06 Season

Synetic Theater's production of *Dracula* will play the Terrace Theater in the Kennedy Center as part of the Center's Prelude Festival before settling in to the Rosslyn Spectrum for six weeks this fall. Later the company will join forces with Theater J to co-produce a new version of the classic story of *The Dybbuk* in which the use of magic in the cause of love goes horribly awry. Next spring, the company will bring to the stage an adaptation of Dante Alighieri's epic poem *The Divine Comedy* with its tour of all the levels of hell and the aspirations of divinity. All three productions will be directed by Paata Tsikurishvili and choreographed by Irina Tsikurishvili, who between them, have been nominated for thirteen and won four Helen Hayes Awards in the last six years. They may well add to the total of wins this May 9 when the 2004 awards are presented as they have three nominations.

4-08 Tomorrow's Theater Alliance Benefit Includes Art To Go

The attendees at tomorrow's benefit gala for Theater Alliance will be going home with works of art donated by local and international artists including some of the Potomac Region's theater community's best known performers/artists. The $100 a ticket event begins with the 2 pm matinee of the Theater Alliance's latest production, *The Spitfire Grill*. Afterwards, a reception will be held at the Pierce School Lofts just around the block from the theater where a hundred works of art will be on display. These include pieces by Conrad Feininger, Rick Foucheux, Ian LeValley and Sarah Marshall. After ample time to view the art and sample the food and drinks, a drawing will be held and

the person selected will have his or her choice among all the art works. The drawing will continue until each of the participants in the gala have been able to select a work to take home. Tickets can be purchased by calling 800-494-8497 or online at www.theateralliance.com.

4-07 And The Ushers' Monthly Favorite Show Award Goes To . . . The Goat

The theater enthusiasts who usher in the theaters in the Potomac Region, and who participate in the Ushers' Favorite Show Award program sponsored by Potomac Stages, have named the Arena Stage production of Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* as their favorite show for the month of March, 2005. The production, directed by Wendy C. Goldberg, runs through April 17. The selection makes *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* eligible, along with those selected for each of the months of 2005, for the annual "Ushers' Favorite Show of the Year" award to be announced next year. If you usher at local theaters and would be interested in participating in the Ushers' Favorite Show Award program, click here to learn how to sign up.

4-06 Catalyst, Five Actors, A Director, Designer and Composer to Receive Mary Goldwater Awards

This year's Mary Goldwater Awards, given by the Theatre Lobby for the 18th year, will honor Catalyst Theater Company for consistent excellence as well as eight individuals. The awards will be presented in a ceremony held at the Woman's Club of Chevy Chase, 7901 Connecticut Avenue in Chevy Chase MD at 8 pm on May 16. Here is the list of recipients of the 2005 awards:

- Catalyst Theater Company for consistent excellence
- Lindsay Allen for performances with Rorschach, Open Circle, Longacre Lea and Project Y
- Chris Davenport for performances with the Washington Stage Guild and Washington Shakespeare Company
- Aubrey Decker for performances with Theater Alliance, Round House Theatre and Studio Theatre
- Karl Miller for performances with Rorschach, Theater J. Washington Shakespeare Company and Round House Theatre
- Suzanne Richard for her direction of the Open Circle Theatre production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*
- Matt Soule for his set designs for the American Century Theater and the Washington Shakespeare Company
- Jason Stiles for performances with the Washington Stage Guild, Longacre Lea and Rorschach
- Jesse Terrill for his original music for Catalyst Theatre productions

4-05 Four College Productions Invited to Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival

The thirty-seventh annual American College Theater Festival, sponsored by the Kennedy Center, will feature full productions of four college shows during the April 18 - 24 event. The honored four are:

- Western Michigan University's *Othello*
- The University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff's *The Hip-Hop Project*
- The Playwrights' Theatre at Boston University's *Jasper Lake* which earned its author John Kuntz the National Student Playwriting Award and the Paula Vogel Award in Playwriting.
- Minnesota State University-Moorhead's *Never Swim Alone*

The first three will be presented in the Terrace Theater while the fourth will be in the Theater Lab along with the Seventh Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival. In addition, Tickets are $5 per production.

4-04 New Book Tracks Rise and Fall of Broadway Musical

he Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical, a new book by composer/author Mark N. Grant, tracks the history of the form of musical theater often referred to as the "Broadway Musical" or simply the "American Musical." Grant analyzes the impacts of changes in vocal technique, technology and the roles of composer, lyricist, librettist and director on the form which began about 1866 with *The Black Crook* and which Grant feels reached its golden age between 1927 and 1966. Potomac Stages' review finds the book fascinating and useful in its discussion of the "rise" of the form but somewhat less satisfying in its treatment of the "fall." Click here to read the entire review.

4-01 Library of Congress Screens Hollywood's Vision of Three Broadway Musicals

Three of the films to be screened at the Library of Congress this month are adaptations of major Broadway musicals. *Hello, Dolly*, the film in which Barbara Streisand took the role that had been so well served on Broadway by Carol Channing and a host of others including Pearl Bailey, will be shown on April 8. The musical version of *Charley's Aunt, Where's Charley?*, which captures Ray Bolger's Tony Award winning performance, will screen on April 15, while April 21 will see the screening of the movie *Call Me Madam* staring Ethel Merman in her first Tony Award winning role. All are free but reservations are highly recommended as the Mary Pickford Theatre in the Library's Madison Building on Capitol Hill has only 60 seats. Call 202-707-5677.

Click here for the news archive for March